

3976
AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT TO MAKE MEN GRATEFUL TO GOD
FOR MERCIES RECEIVED,

TWO
SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF RENFREW.

On THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29th, 1798,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A
GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

BY THE
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TWO
SERMONS, &c.

EXODUS XV. 1.

*"I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed
gloriously."*

THESE words direct our attention to an event the most wonderful, to an interposition of Divine Providence the most astonishing, that is recorded in the sacred writings.

In the former part of this book, we have an account of the departure of the children of Israel from the land of Goshen, and their journeying onward, until they came to Baalzephon. This Baalzephon was situated upon the west point of the Red Sea, and is now called Suez. Here the Israelites encamped, and here Pharaoh and his host are supposed to have gotten the first sight of them, after they left Goshen. Perhaps they were directed to take this circuitous

march, by a superintending Providence, rather than go by the peninsula, which might have led them into a war with the Philistines. And by taking the particular route between the mountains of Hiroth, Pharaoh might be drawn forth upon a supposed advantage obtained. In the alarming situation in which they now were, Moses encouraged them to advance to the sea shore: ~~this being done~~, he lifted up his powerful rod, and, lo! the waters separate, when, in two columns, and in a strange path, he conducted them safe to the opposite shore—then, the waters re-assuming their former bed, overwhelmed Pharaoh and his host, and left not a man to carry back the news to Egypt.

Moses, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, composed the inimitable hymn of which my text is a part, and he and the children of Israel sung it, before they left the place, where they saw with their eyes, this miracle wrought in their favour.

Not far from the place where the enemies of Israel and of Israel's God were destroyed, has the same superintending Providence, given our fleet a complete victory over a cruel, and no less infidel foe; and it is more than probable, that few, if any of those infatuated creatures landed in Egypt, with Buonaparte at their head, shall ever return to France, to tell their desperate deeds. For this victory, and other remark-

able instances of the Divine favour manifested to us, we, with the rest of our brethren in the nation, are called upon by our loving sovereign, to set this day apart as a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for his goodness. And cold—nay, something worse than cold, must that heart be that will not join in the grateful song, “I will sing unto the Lord, “for he hath triumphed gloriously.”

This song not only looks back to what God had done for his church and people, but it looks forward to what he will do for them in future times. So that we may consider Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh and his host, as typical of something more extraordinary towards the end of the world, when God will pour out his plagues upon all Antichristian powers. Let us watch the signs of the times, that we may avoid the evil of the latter days.

In discoursing from these words, I propose

- I. To make a few observations on thanksgiving.
- II. To mention some of those mercies that call upon us at this time to give thanks.
- III. Bring the matter home to ourselves.

And then conclude with a particular exhortation.

And, may God himself accompany with his blessing the truths to be delivered.

I am first to make a few observations on thanksgiving. And here I would observe in general, that thanksgiving is the duty, and will be the delight of every true Christian. We are all forward enough to implore God to avert those judgments which threaten us, and to supplicate God for those blessings we stand in need of; but we are too careless to preserve upon our minds an abiding sense of God's goodness, in averting the one, and in granting the other. This is strikingly illustrated in the account of the lepers, mentioned by the evangelist Luke. All the ten lepers were very earnest in supplicating God for the mercy they stood in need of—all the ten were cleansed—"but only one returned to give glory to God." I would not be thought here to insinuate that this is the proportion of thankful souls in the kingdom at present, for I believe there never was an occasion of this kind, where joy and thankfulness were more real and universal. Nor would I be understood here, as if I meant that *one day*, or one half day's appearance in the house of God, during the year, was sufficient to fix the character of a man, either as a loyal subject, or a good Christian.

It is not a single act, but the general tenor of a

man's life, that enables us to judge of the one and of the other. He who thinks it enough to go to church upon a day of public fasting and humiliation, or upon a day of public thanksgiving, while he despises the Sabbaths of the Lord, and disregards the public ordinances of religion all the rest of the year, offereth to God the sacrifice of a fool, and not the tribute of praise. What I mean here is, that men are more ready to supplicate God to avert judgments and bestow favours, than they are to show the gratitude of their heart for mercies received, by an uniform and steady perseverance in all the duties of religion.

But to be a little more particular. Thanksgiving is a duty strictly enjoined in the word of God: "Offer unto God thanksgiving," Psal. l. 14. "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth," Psal. xxxiv. 1. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you," 1 Theff. v. 18. By the laws of Ezekiel's temple, the worshippers were so required to go in at one door, and out at another, that none might at any time turn their backs upon the mercy-seat. By the laws of God, we must keep straight on in our way to heaven, without turning to the right hand or to the left; we must especially beware of living in the habitual neglect of

the positive duties of religion, because such a conduct discovers an ungrateful disposition, and is highly displeasing in the sight of God. An unthankful soul acts against his own interest and happiness, whether he be in prosperous or adverse circumstances.—To thank God for mercies, is the way to secure them—and to thank God for miseries, is the way to remove them. Even common mercies to a thankful soul, prove a blessing, but to an unthankful soul, they often prove a snare. A grateful heart will always be submissive unto the Divine will; but an ungrateful, rebellious spirit, will not submit even to the laws of heaven.

There are some persons among us who go about to persuade others that a day of thanksgiving to God, for victory over our enemies, is unlawful. We live in an age, my friends, when nothing is to be wondered at—an age, when establishments of every kind are evil spoken of by some, whether these establishments have God or man for their author. There are some persons, who carp at the church, for setting apart any day for public worship, but Sabbath. And are there not some men among us who cavil at the most glorious institution that ever was ordained, I mean the institution of the Sabbath, who, like their great patrons, the French Directory would rejoice to see it erased from our creed?

Nay more, is there not a new race of men sprung up among us, who cavil at the word of God itself, and reject with ridicule, the precious truths therein contained: truths, which are the foundation of all our hope, and the source of all our joy? These disturbers of society have a deep-rooted enmity at all establishments, both in church and state, and were their power equal to their inclination, both would soon be overturned, and we should soon see set up in their place, all the tortures of French cruelty, and all the horrors of French Atheism.

But let us hear their objections.

“Nothing,” say they, “can be a greater insult to the Majesty of Heaven, than to thank him for the destruction of our fellow-creatures.”—This objection may appear plausible at first sight, but is truly jesuitical, and seems intended to mislead and deceive the unwary. The design of our present meeting is, not to thank God for the destruction of our enemies, but to bless God who has prevented our enemies from destroying us, by defeating their diabolical designs, and giving such signal success against a people, who have long been the plague of Europe. They were so under their monarchy, they are now tenfold more so, under their shockingly corrupt democracy.

By these victories, for which we are now met to

thank God, our lives and properties, our liberties and religion, our every thing dear and valuable in life, have been, under Providence, preserved. A great addition hath been made to our fleets by the diminution, yea, almost annihilation of theirs; our trade is preserved; the means of carrying on their threatened invasion destroyed; and the designs of internal foes effectually crushed. And are not these sufficient grounds for thanksgiving and joy? But I would ask those men who thus construe our present meeting, whether they would have rejoiced, had our enemies been as victorious over us, as we have been over them? Yes, my friends, and I am much afraid would have dealt destruction round them with a liberal hand. "But thanks be to God who hath given us the victory," by which so much good hath been secured, and so much evil hath been prevented. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever," Psal. cvi. 1.

The *second head* was to mention some of those mercies, which call upon us to be thankful.

What I have to offer upon this head will fall chiefly under the doctrine of Providence. A doctrine, my friends, in which you and I are deeply interested. A doctrine, which though denied by the

present leaders in France, is full of comfort and consolation to the true Christian. In adversity, it pours the healing balm of consolation into the soul, and in prosperity, it teaches to acknowledge God as the giver of every good and perfect gift.

It is the happiness of all the true Israel of God, that their keeper neither slumbers nor sleeps. He watches over the interests of individuals, and much more over the interests of nations, especially where the happiness of his own people is involved. The providence of God inspects and governs all things; for God's seeing and knowing all things, is in order to his governing and disposing all things; and this he does for his own glory, and the happiness of those who love and serve him.

In the history of the Jews, and in the rise and fall of empires, we have the most astonishing and convincing proofs of an over-ruling providence. But of all the revolutions that have taken place on earth, of all the periods mentioned in history, there never was a period like the present, nor was the hand of Providence ever so manifest, as in the present state of these kingdoms, compared with all the other kingdoms in the world. I do not call upon you to recollect an history, which few of you have ever had an opportunity to consult, but I call upon you to recollect an history, with which all of you ought to

be acquainted—I mean the history of your Bibles.—There you may see what changes and dangers the church of God hath undergone. At one time, you may behold her tossed upon the floods—at another time, you may see her driven into the desert—at a third time, she is banished into captivity. But Jehovah had charged his providence with her, and on this account, she continued safe in the floods—alive in the desert—and undisturbed in the captivity.—Think too, on the changes which families and individuals have experienced within the little circle of your own acquaintance, within the short period of your own lives. And who can tell what momentous events, now in the womb of Providence, shall be hereafter produced, before that period arrive, when the doctrine of the cross, in all its glory and native simplicity, shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. As a prelude to that happy period, scripture informs us, that there will be a general decay of religion—an open contempt of its doctrines, its precepts, its sacred institutions and its followers. How like to this are the present times? Does not infidelity stalk abroad at noon day without shame?

Never was there more knowledge in the world, and never was there less piety. Never were the truths of religion more clearly and universally taught, and never were these sacred truths more tortured,

misconstrued, and abused by ignorant and designing men, and never were the public institutions of our holy religion more shamefully neglected. What the end of these things shall be, God only knows; I do not mention them to damp our joy upon the present occasion; my motive in doing so is, "that we may rejoice with trembling," that we may mark the signs of the times, and endeavour to profit.

The signs of the times are truly alarming, and from these signs, some men have ventured to prophesy concerning the seat of the beast, the downfall of Antichrist, and the end of the world. "Secret things belong to God," and we but expose ourselves, when we attempt to speak of things which God has not revealed. There is no doubt but Rome is humbled, Antichrist brought low, and the end of the world drawing on apace. But who can tell when the end of these things shall be? Near as they may appear to some persons, yet for any thing we know, banished Antichrist may return in triumph to Rome, and his votaries may become tenfold more the children of fanaticism and the dupes of superstition than ever, before that period arrive, "when God will destroy him with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming," 2 Theff. ii. 8.

Of all the kingdoms on earth, Scotland alone, by the good providence of God, was enabled to resist

the intolerant spirit of the church of Rome, and in spite of her bulls and her anathemas, nobly persisted in refusing to fall down and worship the beast. England has long since come out of her; so that we may venture to hope, God will not involve us in her punishment.

At the same time, let us not be high-minded, but fear—let us not forget the loving-kindness of the Lord towards us, lest he be provoked to undo all he hath done for us. He hath instruments at his command, to carry on his designs and execute his judgments. “He doth according to his will in heaven and on earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou? Dan. iv. 35. It is easy with God, if he chuse, to divide our counsels, and to frustrate the best laid schemes of the wisest men. If evil be determined against Absalom, he can make the wise counsel of Ahithophel despised, and the evil counsel of Hushai preferred. He may suffer a set of zealots to over-run the country, who, under the plausible appearance of religious instruction, and the apparent desire of propagating religious knowledge, may unhinge the minds of the rising generation, already too much afloat, and by degrees introduce some new doctrine of their own, that may lead away the unthinking, from the faith as it is in Jesus, and in the end, sap the foundation

of our happy establishment in church and state. If we forget God, and our duty to God, while he is visibly smiling upon all our endeavours; if, with the Bible in our hands, we hearken to men who ridicule the cheering and soul-comforting doctrines it contains; if we listen to doctrines, however fashionable, that should rouse our indignation and excite our resentment, being subversive of the glorious truths of the gospel of Christ; if we follow after those who are given to change; murmur at our situation, whether civil or religious, and seek to better it by unlawful means, what can we expect, but that God may suffer us to become the dupes of designing, unprincipled men, and allow those who now hate us, to bear rule over us? He suffered for a time, that blasphemous infidel Sennacherib, to be the executioner of his justice upon the Jews, and afterwards upon the Egyptians. And who can tell, but God may be using that infatuated people with whom we are at war, as his instruments, to punish wicked Christians; as well as for the trial of those who hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints?

At a time then, when infidels are using every method, open and concealed, to overturn Christianity, I call upon you, my dear hearers, from a sense of duty, and a concern for your best interests, to be upon your guard against *French principles*, as well as a-

gainst Frenchmen. Frenchmen may invade, and may overcome, which is scarce supposable,—but I will even make the supposition, improbable as it is, that they do effect a landing, and even overcome us fighting in our defence.—What then? we die in a noble cause, and death, in defence of our religion, and every thing we hold dear and valuable in this world, would be preferable to life, under the dominion of such miscreants, as suck the heart's blood of every country they enter, and that too, under the pretext of service and kindness.

Yet after all, death is the utmost to which their malevolence can carry them, “after this they can do no more.” But if we adopt their wicked principles, and embrace their blasphemous opinions, we embrace misery and wretchedness in this world, and have nothing but the certain prospect of endless misery in the world to come.

But let us consider the consequences of embracing their principles even in a temporal point of view. And here I shall just mention the fate of one country, which of itself is sufficient to illustrate what I mean; and that is Holland. And how was Holland overcome? Was it by the sword of France, when nobly defending her privileges civil and religious? No: For then her defence would have been recorded to her praise.—But, poisoned by those wicked

principles received from France, she deserted the faith for which her ancestors bled, and basely sacrificed her all, to the fair promises of French Atheists.

O Holland! wary, but too selfish Holland, hadst thou kept thy faith, the “faith once delivered to thee” by the saints—hadst thou feared God, and continued in the exercise of true religion—hadst thou been faithful in thy alliance with Britain, and not hearkened to the siren song of French principles and French Atheists, thou mightest have still been happy! But alas, alas! too fond of traffic, thou hast bartered away thy reputation, thy independence and thy religion, for base dishonour—abject slavery—and the foulest atheism. Let murmurers look at Holland and tremble, let them look at Holland again, and learn to prize their mercies both temporal and spiritual. Holland, who but a few years ago was the storehouse of Europe, and the centre of all commercial intercourse, now exhibits a picture of emptiness and misery in the extreme. The sources of her wealth are now dried up—the means by which she obtained riches, are either taken from her, or she dares not use them. She was happy, but she would not believe it.—She profited by all the nations of Europe, yet was not content.—She had the form of religion, but grew tired of religious duties.—The Sabbath was violated and profaned—the ordinances

were ridiculed and deserted, *sure and certain presages of approaching ruin*. She became wise in her own imagination—embraced, without examination, the doctrine of those who are given to change—became highly dissatisfied, of course, with all establishments, civil and religious, and longed exceedingly for an opportunity to cast off the yoke.—An opportunity offered—she eagerly embraced it, and now “she is eating the fruit of her own ways, and filled with her own devices.”

May Holland ever stand as a beacon to Britain, to guard and preserve her against the quicksands of Liberty and Equality, on the one hand; and against the dangerous rocks of Atheism and infidelity on the other.

It must indeed be allowed that we of this nation have been ungrateful to God for mercies received, as well as those of other nations, yet I am persuaded there are not a “few names in it, who have not defiled their garments.” A remnant who cease not to call upon God, and for whose sakes, he hath spared and preserved us from the general calamity. May God increase their number, strengthen their faith, and preserve them from seduction. Innumerable and artful have been the attempts of designing, unprincipled men, to shake the faith of the true Christian, and to make all dissatisfied with their

present condition. A conduct so horrible this, that it cannot surely be thought improper in us to pray God, that he may confound the wicked counsels, and disappoint the infernal designs of such monsters of iniquity. When we consider the low artifice, and the persevering zeal, with which those men have endeavoured to disseminate their wicked principles, both of a civil and a religious nature; when we look to the present state of this country, flourishing in arts and flourishing in manufactures, there cannot remain a doubt with us, but that there are some inherent qualities in the establishment of this kingdom, in church and state, happily calculated to make every honest man in love with both, and ready at all times, to shed the last drop of his blood in their defence.

To the Reformation, of glorious memory, and the general diffusion of religious knowledge, we are indebted, under Providence, for all our present blessings; and of all the institutions of our pious ancestors, there is none, perhaps, for which we are more indebted to them, than for the establishment of parochial schools. To these nurseries of piety and virtue, we are certainly indebted, for our advanced state in arts and sciences, and for our knowledge of religion above all other nations.—Pity it is, that such useful members of society, as the teachers of youth

are, should be so ill rewarded for their labour; that such nurseries, productive of so much good, should either be neglected or perverted.

In proportion as these nurseries are attended or neglected, the noxious weeds of ignorance and wickedness, or the peaceable fruits of righteousness, will be seen to flourish, or to decay. Instruct men in the principles of religion, make them truly religious before God and the world, and they will be peaceable neighbours, and good subjects; from whom there is every thing to hope, and nothing to fear. But if these principles be neglected—if men be brought up in ignorance and irreligion, they can neither be peaceable neighbours nor good subjects, but are fit for treasons, villanies and spoil—and how can it be otherwise? They are destitute of a principle within, to regulate themselves by, and so must always be “like the troubled sea, whose waters continually cast up mire and dirt.”

If we speak of the effects of religious instruction, these are many and great: they have been happily experienced by our own nation, and readily acknowledged by others. In what nation but this, will you find such strict adherence to public faith; such impartial administration of justice; or such honesty in the private concerns of life? Where such liberal exertions for the poor, as are made in the metropolis

of this kingdom?—But why go abroad for instances of such liberality? There are families in our own parish, upon whom I have made frequent demands in behalf of industrious poor, and I never yet applied, personally, to any of these, that I did not find them “ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” These are some of the many actions which the Christian religion, and the Christian religion alone, can excite men to perform. In the performance of these duties, we do what we can to put honour upon God, by obeying his commands, and God has said, “They that honour me I will honour.” Now this will hold true, whether we speak of nations or individuals. If we speak of nations, have not we of this nation been highly honoured of God, especially of late?

While our enemies have denied the being of a God—the doctrine of a Providence—salvation thro’ a crucified Saviour—and a state of rewards and punishments beyond the grave; we, of this nation, from the fullest conviction of these glorious truths, have not been ashamed to prostrate ourselves before Jehovah, acknowledging our sins, and imploring his mercy and grace, and intreating him to pardon our iniquities, and disappoint the designs of a malignant foe. The Lord hath heard our prayers and answered our requests, and we have met this day, with

millions of our grateful brethren in the land, to render thanks unto the Lord for his goodness.

I might here take notice of many instances of the Divine Goodness to this nation. At present, however, I shall content myself, with selecting a few of those that have a particular reference to our present meeting; and I cannot omit, in the first place, taking notice of the goodness of God to us, with respect to the late harvest. The earth herself, would testify against us as stupid and ungrateful, should we forget this. It is God alone who giveth us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. He hath caused the earth bring forth plenty, and he hath crowned the year with his goodness. "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever," Psal. cxxxiv. 1.

We have been saved from the horror of an invasion by the wisdom and firmness of our councils, and the extraordinary activity of our fleets—and we have been saved from an insurrection, that at one period, assumed the most awful and threatening appearance.

I shall next mention some of the victories obtained by our fleets—and the first that challenges our attention, is the well known victory of Lord Howe in the Channel. This victory gave a decided supe-

riority to our navy, and roused the courage of our seamen.

The next is the unparalleled victory gained by Lord St. Vincent. He engaged a fleet far superior in numbers and in strength, and carried away four of their first rates. I take notice also, of the great victory obtained by Admiral Elphinstone, at the Cape of Good Hope, where the Dutch fleet were taken as it were in a net. I call this a *great victory*, because gained without shedding a single drop of blood.

But the victories obtained within the course of this year, or little more, are unexampled in the annals of the world. Think on the formidable Dutch fleet which sailed from the Texel. The design of our foes was, that joining the squadron which lay in Brest, it should co-operate in invading Ireland, in overthrowing the government, in desolating the land. Scarce had they sailed, when the vigilant, the active, the determined Admiral Duncan came up with them, and completely vanquished them on their own coast.

Turn your attention next to the hero of Italy, who with a fleet of thirteen sail of the line, besides large frigates, about 400 sail of transports, with a chosen band of thirty thousand robbers set off to revolutionize Egypt, and like Alexander the Great,

carry his victorious arms into the east. He sails, and on his way, by deep-laid treachery, takes Malta, and in haughty triumph goes forward to take possession of the land of Egypt.

An inferior fleet under the command of a tried and proved hero is dispatched after him. To the mouth of the Nile he goes, and returns to Sicily without seeing or hearing any thing of him. The nation begin to murmur. Again he sets out. Again he arrives in sight of the Nile, and sees the whole French fleet moored across the bay of Alexandria, in the form of a powerful battery, guarding the passage, after they had landed the hero and his chosen band. Admiral Nelson no sooner came up, than by a bold and an astonishing manœuvre, he attacked them, and destroyed or took the whole, except four—possessed himself of the bay of Alexandria, and completely cut off the retreat of this strange adventurer.

Scarce had the nation received the joyful news, so acceptable to all Europe, when another victory, no less signal, and no less favourable to the peace of this country, is obtained by Sir J. Borlase Warren, off the coast of Ireland, who captured a French squadron of seven ships, with 4000 troops on board. “These
“ are the doings of the Lord, and should be marvelous in our eyes,” Psal. cxviii. 23.

In all our engagements at sea, whether we speak

of fleets, of squadrons, or of single ships; the zeal, fortitude and skill of our commanders, the spirit and intrepidity of our sailors, and the success attending all their engagements, have been brilliant beyond example. But what adds greatly to the brilliancy of our victories is, the exemplary piety of some of our victorious leaders. It is pleasant to hear men, expressing their grateful sense of mercies received; but to hear our commanders, and at a moment too, when flushed with complete victory, ascribing all the glory of their success to God, must give real satisfaction to every one, who acknowledges a God, and believes in the cheering doctrine of a Providence.

At the famous battle of Agincourt, in France, where, if I mistake not, King Henry the V. with 9000 English, totally defeated the French who were near 80,000 strong, the prince, perceiving what a complete victory they had obtained, ordered part of the cxiv. and part of the cxv. Psalm to be sung in the field of battle, to express their gratitude to God in giving him the victory. Some of the historians tell us, that when the victorious English came to the first verse of the cxv. Psalm, they fell down upon their knees, and with one voice shouted, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise and the glory."

Similar to this has been the conduct of some of our admirals of late. The exemplary piety of Admiral Duncan, both before engaging, and after overcoming the Dutch fleet, must be highly gratifying to every well-disposed mind. And will not the conduct of Admiral Nelson, after he had vanquished and taken possession of the French fleet off Alexandria, be long remembered with heart-felt satisfaction? The sun had not gone down on that victory, when the pious hero sent orders to all his captains, to assemble their men as soon as possible, and render thanks to God for giving them the victory; and his own ship set them the example.

What must their enemies, now their prisoners, have thought of this conduct? To see a whole fleet as prompt in the performance of religious duty, as it had been in naval tactics—to see a victorious fleet employed in that religious exercise, which *they* had been taught to despise, could not fail to strike, even them, with wonder and astonishment, and will ever be remembered with delight, by all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

O Britain, highly favoured Britain! be true to thy God, and God will never leave nor forsake thee. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps, so as to promote his own glory, and thy unspeakable comfort and advantage.

Permit me, before I conclude this head, to mention a few circumstances, which tend, I think, greatly to enhance the value of our victories. Now the best way, perhaps, to estimate the value of our victories, is to think what would have been our situation, had France been as victorious over us, as we have been over France; it must have been deplorable in the extreme.—So deplorable, that life would not have been worth enjoying.

No sooner was it known that Buonaparte had gotten out of Toulon, than a general whisper of discontent was heard. For a considerable time, the nation was kept in a state of painful suspense, and men began to be liberal in their censures: some condemned government, though grossly ignorant of the motives from which government acted—others condemned Admiral Nelson, for not overtaking and destroying the whole French fleet, as if our admirals were possessed of omniscience, and had the winds and the waves at their command.

Most men, now a-days, have the vanity to think that they are competent judges of every public matter whatever, whether civil or religious, and at their own fire-side, or in their little gossiping parties, they take upon them to condemn and approve public measures, just as the humour of the moment strikes them. Take their word for it, it is an easy

matter to govern both church and state, though these very persons, perhaps, are living instances how extremely difficult a thing it is for a man "to rule well his own family," or to conduct himself with propriety as an individual, even in the common affairs of life. They talk away of what this general should have done at Dunkirk, and what that admiral should have done in the Mediterranean, though these very persons cannot tell in what part of the world, the one or the other of these is to be found—whether north or south, east or west. Of the secret springs of government we are in a great measure ignorant, nor is it proper that we should know them. And as we are very improper judges of the conduct of our commanders both by sea and land, we should therefore learn to speak with modesty upon subjects we are ignorant of, and judge of others as we would wish others to judge of us.

As to the management of public affairs, this is vested in the hands of men who have given the most satisfactory evidence that they are every way qualified for the great and important duties of their office; and the nation at large, have full confidence in their uprightness and integrity, as well as in their ability.

Instead then of diving into matters we cannot understand, let us rejoice, that these are in the hands

of men, who are every way qualified to manage them. Men, who seem to have been raised up by Providence, to save this country from ruin. Let us study to live in peace one with another, and discharge with fidelity, the various duties incumbent upon us as men and as Christians; leaving the issue of public affairs to Divine Providence, which has so often interposed in behalf of this nation, disappointed our fears, "brought light out of darkness, good out of evil, and order out of confusion."

The issue of things clearly shows us, that whatever is, is best: and the late naval victory, gained over the enemy by Admiral Nelson, is a striking instance of this truth. Had the French fleet been blocked up in Toulon harbour, we should have been in fear and trembling all the winter. Had Admiral Nelson overtaken it and been victorious, the victory would not have been half so complete; for while the two fleets were engaged, the transports would have had time to return to port, and still we should have been afraid of an invasion. Whereas, their landing in Egypt has subjected them to hardships and dangers insurmountable. It hath brought forth a declaration of war from the Divan, and will probably be the mean of forming a strong confederacy against them of the northern powers. But still more—by this victory, a new and boundless source

of trade is opened up to this country, and our character among the nations, will secure to us advantages in trade, which no other nation can enjoy. Let it be our earnest supplication to the God of all grace, that he would write a law of gratitude upon our hearts, and enable us to walk as the children of such distinguished favours.

But if we consider our victories in a religious point of view; we shall find abundant cause to say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how great is thy goodness!" The hellish conspiracy to exterminate the Christian religion, begun in France, by men whose names have long ago been rotten in the Christian world, though deified of late by the sons of Atheism, clearly shows us the nature of the warfare in which we are engaged*. The discovery of this infernal plot, at so eventful a period of the world, is another proof of the singular care, and astonishing goodness of God to this nation; and at the same time, is sufficient to convince all, but Atheists, of the fulfilment of scripture prophecy, "that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the church of Christ."

But there is another view of the subject which I beg leave here to mention, as it hath struck me with

* See Barruel's History of Jacobinism, and Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments in Europe.

some force.—Who can tell, but our victories, especially the victory gained by Admiral Nelson in the east seas, may be the happy mean of opening a door for the propagation of the glorious gospel of the Son of God, in that corner of the world? There the wonders of Jehovah were once conspicuous in behalf of his peculiar people. Not far from the place where this victory was obtained, we can trace the footsteps of our blessed Saviour and his apostles, going from place to place, continually doing good to the bodies and the souls of men; and though the light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God hath long since been shut out from these places, by heathenish darkness and superstition, yet who can tell, but this may be the dawn of that glorious era, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing under his wings?

The astonishing victory gained by our fleet off Alexandria, over an enemy already obnoxious to them, cannot fail to encourage a spirit of inquiry among that people. By this victory, the name of Briton will be known, where Britons never were. They will enquire what we are, and what is our religion. And finding that we are a brave, humane, steady, honest and religious people, who can tell, but they may discover an eager solicitude to cultivate our friendship—to court our alliance—and to

embrace our religion. And when Jerusalem shall be built up again, these shall come with their gifts and their oblations.

This was the case after the defeat of Maxentius by Constantine; the Roman empire, with all its tributary provinces was added to the church of Christ. There is that in the temple and service of God, and in the gospel of Christ, which once went forth from Jerusalem, to invite even kings to bring presents; nay more, there is enough to induce kings "to present themselves to God a living sacrifice." In prophetic language, and in reference to gospel times, David mentions two countries, out of which subjects and suppliants were least expected; yet the prophet says, with seeming satisfaction, "Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth their hands, Psal. lxviii. 31. They shall come from these countries and others similar to them, and shall seek God's favour, and submit to God's laws.

Now who can tell, but this may be the dawning of that happy period, when these countries shall stretch forth their hands; when they shall say, hearing of our religion, and wishing to embrace it, what the people of Macedonia said to Paul, "Come over and help us."

When this is the case, I can then see a call in providence to send missionaries; I can then be per-

suaded, that there will not be wanting men of real principle, men of real abilities, of prudence and experience, to go over and do what they can, to propagate the name and religion of Jesus, among these poor untutored tribes. The time, we are assured, will come, when Zion shall be built up again, when they shall come from Egypt and Ethiopia, and the countries around, and in imitation of Old Testament times, shall set their faces towards Jerusalem, and say to their fellow worshippers as they advance, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his steps."

Happy times! and happy they who live to see them; and happier still, they who shall go over and be assisting to them. Better be there, when this is the case, even among a people who are poor, and mean, and ignorant, yet willing to learn; than to dwell among a people, rolling in affluence and splendor, who profess to know God, but in works deny him.

The rest of the subject must be left till the afternoon.

SECOND SERMON.

EXODUS XV. 1.

“ I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously.”

THERE cannot be presented to the human mind a more pleasing idea, than that of a whole nation, millions of souls, assembled together, and at the same instant of time, offering to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. By this act, we recognize our mercies—acknowledge God to be the author of them, and with one heart and one voice, ascribe to him, as is his due, all the glory and all the praise. “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” And who is there among us, my friends, that will not cordially join in the grateful song?

In the former discourse I have said a few things on the duty of thanksgiving. I have also mentioned some of those instances of the Divine goodness,

lately manifested in behalf of this nation, with a view to excite in us the warmest gratitude and love to God, "who daily loadeth us with his benefits." I now come,

In the *third place*. To bring home the matter to ourselves.

By our pious and rightful sovereign, we are called upon to set this day apart to Almighty God for public thanksgiving, on account of the recent and signal interposition of his providence, in the late memorable battle fought in distant seas, as well as our deliverance from invasion and from intestine commotions. And if we have a just sense of the value of these mercies, for which we are met this day to render thanks unto the Lord, our hearts, I am persuaded, will be enlarged in his praise. By the wonderful things God hath done for us, he hath made this year remarkable to future ages.

The victory here alluded to, together with the other victories obtained by our fleets, have not only been the means of saving this country from misery and ruin, but must be productive of the greatest advantages.—Had the French been as successful against us, as we have been over them, we had been groaning under the horrid effects of their tyrannical power.

Europe in general, and Protestants in particular, have good reason to be glad and rejoice.

But what is particularly pleasing to observe at this time, is, that all sorts of persons confess the hand of God in these victories. Not only our commanders and privates—not only our statesmen in both houses of Parliament—not only the serious but the profane, agree “that these are the doings of the Lord.”

In former times, it was too common for instruments to challenge the glory of great actions to themselves; but to the honour of the navy of Great Britain, both our officers and men agree, and are not ashamed to acknowledge “that God hath given them the victory.” When men of piety and virtue fill our places of trust at home, and command our fleets and armies abroad, what is it the nation may not expect?

In these signal victories obtained over our enemy, we may behold displayed in our behalf, all the perfections of Jehovah.

His power hath been manifestly displayed, in thwarting the designs, and crushing the attempts of an inveterate foe. I do not mean by saying so, to detract from the skill, the bravery, and the steady conduct of our commanders; No: These men were appointed for the purpose, and God hath put great

honour on their names, by making use of them in our signal successes against the enemy. These are but instruments however, and may be content to affirm, in the words of one who was a great adept in military affairs, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, " which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers " to fight," Psal. cxliv. 1. When we consider the great things done in behalf of this nation, we must acknowledge, that nothing but an arm full of power, could have achieved them; and by so doing, he hath subdued a strength, which in their own eyes, appeared invincible. The progress which they made for a time upon the continent, was truly alarming.—At their command, cities opened their gates, and vast provinces submitted at discretion. Their power and their cruelty struck terror into the hearts of all around. Britain alone, stood out against the imperious foe. By all the treachery and dissimulation, for which they are so famous, they endeavoured to detach Ireland from this country. By bribes, and flattering declarations, they encouraged a spirit of rebellion there, and promised to assist the disaffected with a force sufficient to emancipate them from slavery. They declared themselves rooted enemies to our religion, and vauntingly said, they would extirpate the very name of Christian.—But the Almighty had

said otherwise, and therefore, all their attempts were vain and unsuccessful.

Think on the well known instance of Bantry Bay, which they reached without opposition. At this time, our fleets were so situated, that by adverse winds, they could not possibly get out of port. Yet He, whom the winds and the seas obey, made these very elements fight for us—scattered our enemies, and completely frustrated their designs.

And has not the justice of God manifested itself against our external and internal foes, in effectually disappointing the vain attempts of the one, and exposing the infernal designs of the other?

We are now at war with a people, who think they have a right to every thing which they can seize by force or by fraud—a people, whom no treaty or oath can bind, if by any means they are able to violate them. Since the murder of their king, they have been wading through blood, to satisfy their savage cruelty, and gratify their rapacious ambition. By bribery, and every mean which malice and wickedness can invent, they have endeavoured to disturb the peace of kingdoms, sowing the seeds of discord, wherever they feared opposition, or expected plunder. Having torn down the great bulwark of a nation, in their own kingdom, *the distinction of ranks in society*, they endeavour to make other nations fol-

low their example, and in order to accomplish their end, they sedulously inculcate the doctrine of equality, they teach men to disregard their rulers, and despise their superiors. This doctrine, though perfectly consonant to a wicked unprincipled heart, is contrary to strict justice, and contrary to scripture; and I might add, it is contrary to, and condemned by, their own invariable practice. But the people of this country are too well acquainted with their Bibles; and their faith in the great and precious truths therein contained, is too well founded, to be shaken by the fair speeches of French Atheists. These men are ready to make the fairest promises, and the most flattering declarations; but, contrary to all their pretences, it is too evident, that their will and pleasure are, that every part of Europe shall bow the knee to them—bring forward their all and lay it down at their feet—and in return, they shall receive from them—Liberty and Equality—that is, they shall be permitted to become their slaves.

But not content with endeavouring to enslave all Europe, they send 30,000 men into Egypt, to carry on their system of plunder and cruelty there.—But the justice of God hath visibly overtaken them, in the complete defeat they have sustained by sea; and those who have landed in Egypt must fall at last,

victims to their own folly and madness; for justice, however slow to appearance in its operation, is always sure, and will, in the end, overtake and destroy all workers of iniquity. While they are employed in acts of injustice, cruelty and oppression, may it ever be our study and delight, “to do justly, “to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.”

If we consider the attempts that have been made, to distress and ruin the peace and happiness of this country, by designing men, working upon the credulity of the ignorant and unprincipled, to bring about their own ends, we must admire the wisdom of God, which graciously interposed in our behalf, and not only prevented their wicked designs, from being carried into execution; but brought order out of confusion, when all was dark and threatening. It is a truth well known to yourselves, that no mean has been left untried, to disseminate those diabolical principles in this country that have ruined France; and will, in the end, be the ruin of any people. To prepare men for the reception of these principles, various attempts have been made, first, to unsettle their minds in things civil and religious, and then render them inimical to the present rulers, and the present government. And did not the unaccountable conduct of Opposition give too much countenance to these daring attempts? Their constant cry was, that

the war was unjust, and that Ministers were carrying it on, contrary to the sense of the nation at large. Every thing said by Opposition, was industriously handed about the country by the disaffected, as if on purpose to create universal discontent. At last, the spirit of the nation was roused, and the sense of the nation tried: and to its credit and honour, the collected, and almost unanimous sense of it was, a firm and determined resolution to carry on the war, against the treacherous and perfidious foe without—to check, by every legal method, the daring spirit of rebellion forming within, and to protect from insult and danger, the lives and properties of peaceable and loyal subjects.—“To the only wise God
“ be glory and honour.”

When we consider the exalted privileges, civil and religious, which we of this nation enjoy, and the desperate attempts that have been made, by foreign and domestic foes, to deprive us of these advantages, we have reason to say with the Psalmist, “O
“ Lord, how great is thy goodness!” Had not the goodness of God interposed in our behalf, and frustrated the designs of our enemy, deplorable, beyond expression, had been our situation. Every victory gained by our fleets and squadrons, during the whole of this war, should be considered by us, as a singular instance of the Divine goodness

in our behalf, because our danger was great, had we failed in any one of these engagements. But the goodness of God not only appears in our signal successes against the enemy abroad; but in exposing the horrid designs of a cruel, unnatural enemy within.

The British constitution, under which we have the happiness to live, is the pride of every true Briton, and the envy of the world. It secures to us the most invaluable blessings, civil and religious. It is a constitution that hath stood the test of many years, with growing approbation. Yet its superior excellency, hath not been able to screen it from the hostile attacks of unprincipled men. These have bound themselves with an oath, to destroy it, and to set up in its place, a new constitution, brought over from France, and rolled up in the blood of thousands and ten thousands. But the goodness of God hath graciously interposed in behalf of this nation, and prevented the introduction of this bloody constitution. The traitors have been discovered, tried, found guilty, and punished with banishment or death, "O praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men," Psal. cvii. 8.

If we speak of liberty, whether civil or religious, we certainly enjoy as much of it, as a wise and

good man can reasonably desire, and more of it than we have made a proper use of. Viewing our situation and circumstances as we ought, our hearts should be filled with gratitude, our mouths with praise, and our lives with obedience, to that "God" who daily loads us with his benefits." "The lines" have fallen to us in pleasant places." Justice runs down our land like a stream.—Trade and manufactures flourish—no man need be idle who is willing to work, and never were greater encouragements given, even to the common labourer. In this country, whatever a person earns, he can call his own, and no man dare take it from him, or insult him with impunity.

Let us contrast our situation for a moment with that of France, and if we be not determined to keep our eyes shut against the force of truth, we must acknowledge the singular happiness of our situation, and bless God for it.

We have a king, who, with justice may be styled the father of his people, who, while animated by an ardent desire to promote the Divine glory, and the interests of Christianity, hath ever near his heart, the welfare and prosperity of his subjects: hath ever been found the guardian and protector of those who live peaceable lives "in all godliness and honesty." By our happy constitution, moreover, we are allow-

ed to sit under our own vine and fig-tree—to attend the public ordinances of Divine grace without fear—to hear the joyful sound, “that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” 2 Cor. v. 19.—that life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10.—that we are begotten again unto a lively hope, or an assurance of salvation, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, &c. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.—and that to them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, will be rendered eternal life, Rom. ii. 7.

But is it so in France? Ah no! They have five kings, but five despots—who neither hear nor believe any of these doctrines just now mentioned. If formerly, they had any thing like true religion among them, they have now put an end to it; and by a cruel edict, expressly prohibited every thing that might bring it into view. It is true, they have discovered a wish of late to adopt some settled system of civil regulation; and to bring this about, they have called in religion to their aid. So that while this strange conduct of theirs furnishes us with a strong argument in favour of religion, even from Atheists, it reads to us this important lesson, That whenever men wish to throw all order into confusion, to dissolve all society, and

to live at large, like savage beasts of prey, they must discard religion. On the other hand, if men wish to support civil establishments, to secure social happiness, and to have their lives and properties protected, they must embrace religion. Though these five tyrants of France have unwittingly furnished us with a strong argument in favour of religion, they demonstrate to the world, by their own conduct, that they are destitute of it themselves. Let their pretensions and declarations be what they will, it is evident, from all their proceedings, that they are grasping at universal conquest, and wish to aggrandize themselves, at the expence of all the nations of Europe, nay, even at the expence of their own.

See the haughty conqueror of Italy, who finished his campaign before others took the field—who was a terror to surrounding states, and insolently boasted, that he would give peace to Europe—liberty to the world—that he would erect his standard in London, and humble the pride of Britons—See him set sail to take possession of the land of Egypt, and carry his conquests to the Indies. But where is he now? What is become of the army of England? They are landed in Egypt, it is true, but, in all probability, they shall leave their carcases in the wilderness.

This great patron of liberty—this mighty con-

queror of kingdoms, must soon be cut off, or obliged to sue for peace—for life—from poor untutored Arabs; or surrender himself a prisoner to the British. His passive followers, the tools of his oppression and cruelty, must be dispirited and languish, or fall by disease; and God seems to have spoken to him, as in the words of the prophet, “the horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the Lord. Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the Lord! Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be a derision,” Jer. xlviii. 25, 26. Sometimes persecutors have groaned out warnings to others by their miserable end; yet the end of all those persecuting tyrants, who have torn and ruined France, does not yet seem to have made any impression upon the minds of that infatuated people. Long has that ill-fated country been the seat of persecution, a land of wickedness; and the people in it have been the instruments of Satan, in shedding the blood of innocent Protestants. God hath heard the cry of martyrs’ blood—the groans of tortured prisoners: “He is making inquisition for blood, and will remember them,” Psal. ix. 12. Perhaps, the chief of God’s controversy with that nation is, on account of the violence done to his own children. He may at present, be using that infatuated people as a rod, to chastise the nations for their

sins; and then he may turn them against one another, until the Protestant religion be established in that country.

IMPROVEMENT.

1st. When Moses had brought the children of Israel to the Red Sea, he commanded them “to stand still and see the salvation of God.” We, my friends, with the rest of our brethren in the nation, are called upon by a pious sovereign, to stand still this day,—to contemplate the wonders which God hath done for us, and to bless his name for his goodness. To him then, as the great first cause, we must ascribe all the praise, and all the glory of these victories, so opportune, and so advantageous. If we ascribe the praise to any other as the first cause, we rob God of his due—we deprive ourselves of the benefits—we discover, that we have not a proper sense of our mercies, and God may be provoked to blast those cheering hopes, which these victories have raised, concerning the peace and prosperity of the nation. In obtaining any advantage over the enemy, we are too ready to look upon the outward means, and visible instruments of our deliverance,

and so forget the Supreme Disposer of all events, who employs them—directs them, and blesses them. Every mercy we receive then, every deliverance with which we are favoured, should be ascribed to God alone as the proper author. “O give thanks
“ unto the Lord for he is good, &c.” Psal. cxxxvi. 1.

2d. Our praise and thanksgiving must be accompanied, with suitable resolutions of amendment. Place all your dependence upon God alone. Provoke not his wrath by your sins, for his vengeance is terrible. Resolve, from a conviction of past guilt, that you will henceforth yield yourselves to the conduct and disposal of infinite and unerring wisdom. “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” Jude 21. Should the contest in which we are engaged with our enemies continue long, and should they in the course of this contest, obtain some great advantages over us, yet let us not despond. The cause for which we contend is noble, for it is the cause of God and of truth. He is a righteous God whom we serve; and in his own time and way, he will effectually plead his own cause, to the joy of his people, and the utter confusion of his enemies.

In every, the most trying situation then, be not cast down, but make your requests known to God, who alone can deliver; and let all your vows and

resolutions be made in a dependence upon Divine aid.

3d. Our praises and resolutions must be followed up with positive acts of true obedience.

If God hath been singularly kind to us as a nation, it is not enough that we make a public appearance, and a public acknowledgment of his goodness in the congregation. Our future conduct must declare to the world, that we have a grateful sense of his goodness upon our hearts. Without this, our public professions, are a solemn mockery of God. Suitable actions, are the truest praises, in the sight of God.

To engage you actively in his service then, recollect the evils, which threatened us as a nation, both external and internal, the many mercies we have received from God, and let the consideration of these, rouse and awake our latent piety, and banish from among us, that shameful neglect of religion, that growing indifference and disregard for its sacred institutions, which are the disgrace of a people professing Christianity. Do nothing that may be offensive to God, or hurtful to the interest of true religion. And while some are studying to be rich by any means; others studying how to cheat, and steal, and take the advantage of their neighbour; and some are even studying how to set the world on fire; study you, my friends, to be holy in all manner of conversation.

Think not that the purity of our established religion, or the superior excellency of our constitution will save us, if we forget God and despise religion; No: these privileges will certainly aggravate our guilt, but not plead our excuse.

There are some men among us, who indulge themselves in gloomy and fearful apprehensions of our situation, who are always prophesying disappointment to us, and success to our enemies, who talk of their numbers—their resources—their daring and persevering spirit, which, they say, in the end must secure them of success. Be it so. Multiply their numbers—magnify their resources—allow that they are capable of making the most desperate attempts, both open and concealed, to ruin this kingdom. What of all this? We are engaged in a good cause; the end we have in view is good, namely, to preserve inviolate, our lives, our properties and our religion, and of course, to secure the peace and happiness of the nation.

God hath already blessed the means employed to bring about this end—and we trust, he will continue to bless them, until we shall obtain an honourable peace upon a sure foundation. If we be faithful to God, and true to one another, I can see no reason for being afraid of the enemy. I am more afraid of that cold indifference and lukewarmness in

religion, which are fast gaining ground among one class of men; and that bold infidelity and profligateness of manners which prevail among another class, than of all the exaggerated strength of the enemy—Nay, than of all the powers in Europe leagued against us. Should the nations of Europe combine against us, we have means sufficient for our own defence and their defeat. But if we make God our enemy by sin, where shall we procure means of safety—with whom shall we form an alliance? Let me call upon all then, without exception, to be faithful in the discharge of their duty to God and to one another, “to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as “wise, redeeming the time, because the days are “evil,” Eph. v. 15, 16.—But as I feel particularly concerned for the young, I would beg leave to conclude at this time, with an address to parents, because much, under Providence, depends upon their conduct, whether the rising generation shall be a seed to serve God—or a seed of evil doers.

PARENTS.—Remember the vows of God are upon you, be conscientious in the discharge of these vows, for God will call you to an account.

Endeavour to possess your children, as early as possible, with an awe and veneration for God, for his worship and for his name. Suffer not your children to trifle with any of God’s commands, but

especially with the fourth, otherwise you give countenance to a sin that will harden the heart, and bring ruin upon both soul and body; for if there be any one species of impiety, by which the very notion of religion may be obliterated from the mind, it is an habitual violation and contempt of that day, which Jehovah hath commanded to be kept holy.

The Sabbath of the Lord, is the Christian's strong hold, so to speak, and I will venture to affirm, that all the infidels and Atheists on earth, and devils in hell, combined together, will never be able to take the city of our God, till the observance of the Sabbath be entirely lost: if ever this should be the case, this country is gone.

There is such a connexion betwixt the observance of the Sabbath, and the progress of religion in the world, that, as this day is neglected or observed, Christianity must stand or fall. Let the great and the small, the rich and the poor, think on this, and act as becomes them. The enemy have already attacked the outworks, and are laying siege to the citadel, let not the rich and the great, by shamefully deserting their post, expose the city of our God to ruin and destruction, but let them act their part and do their duty, that all under them, may be animated and encouraged to follow their example, and both united, may resolve to stand or fall together.

Be grateful to God then, my friends, for the glorious institution of the Sabbath; and, as parents, discharge your duty faithfully upon that day, that it may be well with you and your children for ever. Whatever you wish your children to be, let them see a living example of it in yourselves, otherwise your instructions will go for nothing. Introduce them early at a throne of grace, by prayers for them, and in their presence. To see a parent, in the midst of his beloved offspring kneeling down, and on his bended knees, supplicating the blessing of God upon them, is a sight, with which both heaven and earth are well pleased.

If parents were as much concerned for the eternal happiness of their children, as they are to introduce them with advantage into the world, it would be well for both parents and children—it would be well for religion—and it would be well for the peace and happiness of society.

Parents will rise early and sit late, they will expose themselves to difficulties and dangers by sea and by land—they will consult the wise and experienced, for the temporal advantage of their children; but do not seem to think it necessary to acquaint them early with God and divine things—to exhort them to make choice of that good part that shall not be taken from

them, "and to seek the kingdom of heaven in the
"first place."

There are some parents who would consider it as below the dignity of their enlightened understanding, to speak of God and religion to their children, unless with a design to ridicule both;—and there are some children who would ridicule their parents, as weak and unfashionable, were they to do so. These parents, and these children, are both mistaken; and I wish they may be convinced of their error and wickedness before it be too late.

Children, from various causes, are much sooner from under the eye of their parents now, than formerly; if religious instruction then, be neglected in the early part of life, a thousand to one, if ever they obtain it. And what is the consequence? As a ship at sea, without a rudder, becomes the sport of every wind and wave, and is either dashed to pieces upon a rock, or founders in the deep: so children sent out into the world without being instructed in the principles of religion, which alone can regulate human conduct, become an easy prey to the first artful seducer, and go on from evil to worse, until they be brought to some untimely end. And, O! ye careless and thoughtless parents, will not God require their blood at your hands?

PARENTS.—Lead your children to church, tho'

the duty be considered, by some, as unfashionable. When public worship is over, after a prudent pause, let the remainder of the day be spent with your own families, in your own houses, in the private exercises of religion. Delegate this trust to none, so long as you are able to discharge it yourselves. And here, I am led to speak of the late institution of *Sunday Schools*. I have delivered my sentiments to many of you on this subject already. I have thought of it again and again; and the more I think of it, the more I am confirmed in my opinion. There is some danger, perhaps, for a person to deliver his sentiments publicly upon this subject, unless to give an unqualified approbation of it; as the current of public opinion seems to run strong in its favour, and men are marked out, as of this or that party, according as they approve or disapprove of this institution.

I am now, my friends, standing at my post, and I should think myself unworthy the trust committed to me, did I keep back, or shun to declare, what I consider as essential to your peace and happiness. I say nothing of those men who were the first promoters of this institution, nor of those who patronize it. I hope their motives were pure, and their intentions good. I speak only of the institution itself, and its effects. And here, I am neither ashamed

ed nor afraid to declare—that I can see no necessity for the institution, and I am afraid, men do not consider the effects that are likely to follow it.

In England, necessity may be pleaded; as we are told, there are few parents in common life there, who are qualified to instruct their children in the principles of true religion. But even here I would not give up with the point of necessity. God hath given six days of the week for our own employment, and he challengeth a special propriety in the seventh. There are few men, who wish to do well, but may earn as much in *six days*, as is sufficient to support their families, and educate their children. The Sabbath is a day of rest from worldly employment, and ought to be spent by us, in the public and private exercises of God's worship.—“Six days,” says Jehovah, “shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, “ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy “ God; *in it thou shalt not do any work.*” Now, teaching children to read, I rank among those works which ought to be performed upon the six days. Whatever then is taken from the seventh day, and employed in worldly purposes, I consider as unlawful; and the language of all those parents conduct who do so, to be, “We can employ our children on “ the six days of the week, greatly to our own advantage; but we cannot employ them so upon the

“ Sabbath, therefore, we will fend them to school
 “ on Sabbath, where they shall be taught to read,
 “ and then we shall have them employed all the fix
 “ days of the week for our own advantage.” A
 conduct this, my friends, which I cannot help considering, as a kind of pilfering from God†.

But whatever may be said on the point of necessity, with respect to England, there can be no such argument with regard to Scotland.

From the wise institution of parochial schools, every parish in Scotland is provided with the means of instruction. Children are taught, at least, to read and write, and instructed in the first principles of our holy religion, as contained in our Confession of Faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter. Sunday Schools then, are a reflection upon every parish where they are appointed. Nay more, they are a reflection upon every parent in that parish. It is declaring to the world, that here is a parish where the parents in it, are either grossly ignorant, or

† I am happy to learn, from a gentleman in this neighbourhood, who has been both active and successful, in bringing some of the cotton mills under proper regulations, that in a short time he expects to see all the cotton mills in this county, brought into such a regular system, that no child will be taken into any of them, under ten years of age. By this regulation, children will have their education over, before they are admitted into these mills, and parents will be able to do all the business of Sunday Schools in their own families.

shamefully negligent. Negligent they may be, but ignorant they are not, as I might easily show, from several parishes which come under my own observation. But I need not go without the bounds of my own parish. There are few heads of families in it but can subscribe their own name; and there are no parents in it that I know, but are fully qualified to catechise their own family. If parents be careless, or negligent, to God they must give an account, and terrible will be their doom, who suffer their children to perish for lack of knowledge.

As to the effects of this institution, I am afraid, they are, and will be more serious, than men are now aware of. The very mode of appointing some of them is strange; and here I shall say nothing but what falls under my own observation. A number of young men, perhaps well-meaning, meet together, and consult where a Sunday School should be erected. One says, that such a place would do very well. Another says, that such another place is very much in want of a Sunday School. They go and talk with some of the people in those places, who approve without thinking; they apply to some society, which sends out a deputation, and formally erects a Sunday School, and thus, old and young are put in motion upon the evening of a Sabbath, when they ought to be quiet in their own houses, and employed in the duties of family-religion.

There are many parents, especially in common life, who have never an opportunity of being with their children but on Sabbath evening. Is it not the cruelest thing in the world then, to separate children from their parents, to divide families upon that very evening on which, of all others, they ought to be together?

It is said, I know, that parents and others may attend those meetings, and receive instruction as well as children. This, I dare say, may be the wish of those, who are to be the public speakers upon these occasions, for if none but children were to attend these meetings, the fervour of these teachers might cool. This observation is made from what took place in one of those schools, in this neighbourhood. The person whose turn it was to address the children that night, gave in charge to them before they were dismissed, "To be sure and bring their parents with them next Sabbath evening." This is one of the evils, which I have always thought would accompany this institution; namely, drawing away parents from their own houses, on the evening of a Sabbath, to the omission, or careless performance of family-religion. One of the causes of the degeneracy and profligateness of the present age is, the shameful neglect, if not contempt of family-religion,—and this institution of

Sunday Schools, I am much afraid, is to give it its death wound.

If so much good is to be done to children, by an institution of this kind, why must it be done, at the expence of the duties of the Sabbath? Might not the interest of children be as well promoted, by having the meeting upon Monday night, or Saturday afternoon; and let every family apart, spend the evening of the Sabbath, in the private exercises of religion? This would tend to promote the peace of society, the happiness of individuals, the interest of true religion, and the comfort of families.

But still it may be said, that this institution does not prevent parents from doing their duty at home also. They must be very ignorant of human nature indeed, who think so. Take either young or old, who have been shut up with others in one place, for two or three hours, and employed all that time in reading, repeating, or hearing; attempt to go over the same exercise with them when they get home, and you give them a disgust at religion. The mind and body worn out with attendance and attention, are unable to perform the task, and so family-religion, is either neglected altogether, or carelessly performed.

Another argument used in favour of Sunday Schools is—That parents are shamefully careless and negligent in their duty to their children.—Be it so.—

This institution will certainly encourage and increase that carelessness; and as many parents consider the exercise of a Sabbath evening with their children, as an irksome task, which they are ready to shift, or perform in a careless and superficial manner, so they will readily countenance an institution, which seems so much calculated for their own ease, and their children's advantage. They never seem to think, all the while, that by so doing, they are about to give up the very means of intercourse with their family, which ought ever to be held sacred; because it tends to keep alive and strengthen that affection and regard betwixt parents and children, which should be strong as death, but which without such intercourse, may degenerate into indifference, or something worse.

It is well known to some of you, that there is a number of young men, some of them day-labourers, now preparing for being what is called, lay-preachers; and I understand they are to be fully qualified for this, in 12 or 18 months, and then they are to be sent as missionaries, over Scotland, to instruct the people in the principles of religion.—Perhaps this institution of Sunday Schools, was originally intended to prepare for them a congregation, by the time their teachers shall announce them qualified to preach.—Be that as it will, I repeat it again, my great objection to Sunday Schools is, that I am afraid they will

destroy, in the end, all family-religion; and whatever has a tendency to this, I consider it as my duty to guard you against. I might also show, that these schools are hurtful to *public religion*, for it consists with my knowledge, that children stay at home from church, to prepare their questions for the evening; and thus families are divided, when they ought to be together.

It is both pleasant and profitable, for parents to have their children around them on the evening of a Sabbath, to make them read a portion of God's word, and repeat their questions. By this exercise, parents are improving in religious knowledge themselves, while they are instructing their children. Children begin to see that there is a reality in religion, and that their parents are deeply interested in the welfare of their immortal souls. Parental and filial affection are greatly strengthened, the Sabbath of the Lord is devoutly observed, and both parents and children live together, as candidates for glory, honour and immortality.

PARENTS.—Look back on the days when, on the evening of every Sabbath, you stood around your father and mother, read a portion of scripture to them, and answered the questions they put to you. Do you not even now, remember these days with comfort, do you not think on the conduct of your parents, with the highest approbation?

PARENTS.—Discharge your duty to your children faithfully, and your own hearts will approve of you ; discharge your duty faithfully, and God who is greater than your hearts will approve of you ; discharge your duty faithfully, and your own children will bless you, when your heads are laid low in the dust.

To conclude, let me call upon all, to be grateful to God for his goodness, and to live, as becomes the disciples of Christ. The times in which we live, my friends, are truly awful, whether we consider the state of every kingdom in Europe, or the state of men's minds every where, both in respect to things civil and religious. These alarming, these growing facts call upon you—they call upon me—they call upon every faithful soldier of Jesus Christ to be at his post, “to watch and pray.” To watch against every artful attempt of designing men to mislead and deceive, and to pray for God's grace to resist temptation, and continue steadfast in the faith.

Pray, my dear hearers, for our sovereign, George the king, that He, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, would give him a wise and an understanding heart ; that he would protect his person ; direct his council ; prosper his arms ; and long preserve his numerous issue, as happy pledges of the security of civil and religious liberty.

Pray God to inspire all ranks of men, under our

king and over us, with the spirit of their station; that he would in an especial manner, put it into the hearts of the rich and the great, to be exemplary in religion, “to fear God, as well as to honour the king;” that he would graciously accept the united thanks of the nation, offered up to him this day, for his goodness; and while it is necessary to continue the war, that he would go forth with our fleets and armies, and crown their exertions with success. Pray for that day, when all national jealousies shall cease, when both nations and individuals, will religiously observe that universal rule of equity, “all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,” Matt. vii. 12.

Pray that that happy period may soon come, when nations shall agree “to beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks,” Isa. ii. 4. “When Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, and Judah no longer vex Ephraim,” Isa. ii. 13. When all animosity, civil and religious being totally subdued, peace, concord and prosperity may unite us in a “threefold cord” not to be broken.—And to God the Father, Son and Spirit, be endless praise. Amen. **10 FEB 58**

FINIS.

